DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 166 952 FL 819 820

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TITLE	Nay'nadeligha I'ghaan Dghat'aen'den (The War at Nay'nadeli).
INSTITUTION	Alaska Univ., Fairbanks. Alaska Native Language Center.
PUB DATE	77
NOTE	25p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 ($1.25)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Alaska Natives; *American Indian Languages; *Athapascan Languages; Bilingual Education; Elementary Secondary Education; *Folk Culture; *Language Instruction; *Reading Instruction; *Tales; Uncommonly Taught Languages
IDENTIFIERS	Alaska

ABSTRACT

This reader is intended for use in a bilingual education setting and is geared towards students who are competent speakers of Ahtna Athabaskan with knowledge of the writing system. It is an historical account of a battle and its aftermath from the Cantwell area. It includes an interlinear English translation and a free English translation. (AMH)

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NAY'NADEŁIGHA I'GHAAN DGHAT'AEN'DEN

THE WAR AT NAY'NADEŁI

Told by Henry Peters

FL010020

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NAY'NÄDEŁIGHA I'GHAAN DGHAT'AEN'DEN

Told by Henry Peters
with Jennie Peters

Transcribed and edited
by Jim Kari

A publication of the
Alaska Native Language Center
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

Ahtna Athabaskan 1977

The War at Nay'nadeł̨i

First Printing 100 copies

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Jennie Peters was born at \ Valdez Creek a in 1894.
Her son Henry Peters was born at Valdez in 1912.
Both now live in Cantwell.

NAY'NADEŁIGHA I'GHAAN DGHAT'AEN'DEN

The War at Nay'nadeli

Ts'utsaedi c'eghaan dghat'aen'den yii gha
Long ago war was that

hw'eł na'skolnigi yii gha su tkoniiden.
you we tell for them to know.

Yesigu gaa nadaa gaa Ciisik'ae
Well here down below here [lake south of Susitna Lodge]

Xanc'eltl'aesde u'di'aan yii c'eghaan
[location by it is called this war
Swampbuggy Lake]
dghat'aen'den. Hw'eł na'skolnic. Yiisuh
was. You let us tell. This

nen 'ełdu' gaa stsucde s'eł nakalniisi łu'.
you with here my grandmother used to tell me.

C'eldaan'i łu' uc'ananidenelnen. Yii gha suh
Some of it I have forgotten. Therefore

yen suh snanghutaaxi gha su gaa dants'iniłtaenden.
she to help me for here we brought you.

JP:* Nen hniyaes. Ugheli k'a cuu yidaaghe'.
You talk. Well more OK.

HP: G'ayiic'a Xanc'eltl'aesde
At that time Xanc'eltl'aesde

ninaghadełne c'a Nenana datsii ye tanaghadełne.
people went there too Nenana downriver they came around.

Gaane su hwtsicdze' koodghaan. Stsucde
These ones all they killed. My grandmother

s'eł nakalniis. Ugheldze' yet delts'iine
me she used to tell. Well there people lived

su xona nenatsetah hwts'en ndeden
very long before us from how long

tahwts'en c'a nił̨kenaege' dahwditnesdze'.
ago there was a disagreement among them.

Li'i c'a ugheldze' c'a nił̨hdesneh.
well they didn't speak with each other.

Gaani hnae yii sta'udit'aele yii suh ba
Here words those were misunderstood for this

skadahwdghidaek. Tsaay Hwt'aene kukaskae'
argument began. Tyone Lake Ahtnas their chief

ila' na'uniisden c'a inadatniic.
he tried to when but he failed.
shake hands

Ts'utsaede koht'aene nen' ghił'a'dze'
Long ago people law of the land

'ełdu' yedi kae ca nił̨la' nakutnesden dae'
whatever they shake hands when thus

suh nen' ghił'a'de. K'a' c'a kugha
was the law. Gun too to them

nilggot. Yide c'a ninyuggaay
he brought in peace. Whatever also fox

c'a. Tsaay Hwt'aene K'ey Tsaay gha
also. Tyone Lake Ahtnas [village at mouth of Tyone River]

delts'iine kukaskae' yen suh tiye
people who stayed their chief he is really

ghalii yadanilaa. Snaan utsiye
riches he brought in for him. My mother grandfather

suh. C'ezes ghadzaan'i 'eł tiye
he was. Skin tanned and really

badakulyaa suh.
he brought for him.

Nenana kukaskae' nts'e u'dighi'a'da yen?
Nenana chief what was he called?

JP: C'et'aa.
Feather.
C'et'aa u'dighi'a'. Nenana gha xona
'Feather' he was called. Nenana by

Koht'aene kukaskae'. Gaa ba niyilyaa
people's chief. Here for him he put it down

xu xona ugheli hnae nadudlaexden
when just good word began to come again when

udetniidze' suh Nenana kukaskae' yae'
he thinks Nenana chief aside

ikedelzes.
he kicks it.

"Ghaani, katsuughe ninił̨daeł." K'a li'i
"Come, down by river you put them." But not

ila' na'uniige. Dae' suh xona yet suh
he didn't shake his hand. Thus just then

yehwts'en suh xona li'i ugheli nahwghidlaeghe.
due to this good it did not become again.

Yetsigu c'e'aat katsuughe niiniłdaetl'en
At that time the wife down by river who brought the stuff there

dekan' łdu' yełnes. "Tiye 'eł 'itnes
her husband she nudged him. "Really be careful

suh łniyaes. Li'i ugheldze' diist'aene xa'."
how you talk. Not well it will not be."

Xona koodghaan. Tetsde dudaay kae
Then they killed them. At night spears with

kugha datnenidaetl'. C'edaxał yii
to them they came in. War clubs those

'u'ulten' xu'. C'a xona kii'ghaan
they had. Just war

yihwghidaek de tetsde naatne xa'kiidelzenne
broke out as at night two their clansmen

katsuughe delts'iine łdu'. Lasgi sakidelyaayi
down by river lived. Tobacco snoose

hzaa hdghiłdeł. Yak'a xona kulyesdze'
in their mouths he put. Just then would be safe

k'ehwdiniset. Yak'a li'i netghasdghaale
they realized. Then they would not be killed

kiinizen. K'es kexdelggez. Yii gha xona
they knew. Aside they went. Due to this then

kulyesdze' k'ehwdiniset.
would be safe they realized.

C'eldaan'ne koodghaan. Hwtsidze'
The rest of them they killed. All

kanaałkughilaadze' tetsde. 'Alts'enne hghile' xu'.
were asleep at night. Five there were.

Gaa ku'uze' łu gaa stsucde ku'ughiziix
Here their names here my grandmother used to call them

xuk'a uc'ananidenelnen.
but I forgot.

JP: C'azae yen łdu' Sukay'nalaeł
The nephew he and Sukay'nalaeł

dae' suh u'dighi'a'. Yen xona xa' c'azae
thus he was called. He. nephew

yen c'a 'uyulniic. U'eł c'a izelghaen.
he also he was included. Too he was killed.

Yen c'a u'eł izelghaen. Yet xona
He too he was killed. Then

tetsde Tsaay Hwt'aene kugha daxnidaetl'i
at night Tyone Lake Ahtnas to them they came in

xona hwtsicdze' hw'ak'ae ni hwdiniłnende
just when all their home they destroyed when

c'a ts'iłghan nkaayi xyełtsiin.
one person wounded they made.

Nkaayi xyełtsiin łdu' u'aat łdu'
Wounded they made then his wife

tixaełyiniłtses xu'. Datggedze' k'ay'tah
she packed him out. Up among willows

gge' xaełyiniłtsesdze'. "Yii suh xona naene da
up she packed him. "Just we

ninatnetalyaes den da?"
will they spare us?"

10

"Ghanen hwtsicdze' bikatonhdeł,"
"That one entirely you go after him,"

Tsaay Hwt'aene kukaskae' kułnii. Gaa u'aat
Tyone Lake Ahtnas their chief told them. Here his wife

tixaełyiniłtses xu xona ba 'utgge k'ay'tah
she packed him out then up among willows

u'eł niyaa. Datsene nekeltaeni 'eł
went with him. Downwards she turned around and

datsiits'e' hwtsicdze' uk'et negĥadeł
down below all after her were coming

c'a k'ay'tah i'eł igge' de/iltset.
too among willows on him she flung herself.

Igge' igge' ik'e dekan' ik'e dacanelghel.
On him over him her husband she concealed him.

Yaluus. Hwt'ae'dze' tnesda'dze'
She dragged him. Really he was hurt

dudaay kae. I'eł ca'utnetaen xu'. Yii suh
spear with. She kept him hidden. Then

xona tes ak'aay kazyaa. Ts'akae
just ridge she went up. The woman

nakalniisdze' suh.
used to tell this.

Snaan utsiye 'utggah xona gaa
My mother's grandfather above when here

c'ak'aay kaghiyaa xuh. Ts'utsaede xona
ridge he went upon. Long ago

c'ets'ene' seł u'dighi'a'i seł duugh
beaded boots that they call boot here

nenel'aani. Yii kae datgga dudaay
came too. These with up spear

kedinił'aa xu yen ngedzen. Ya'a dekan'
he leaned on thus he stood. Really her husband

'eł ca'utnetaen. Yii sigu gaa ingił'aen'
and she concealed. Then here he saw her

xuk'a li'i nayz?'ghaele c'a k'ek'ant'ae.
but he didn't kill them it seems.

Dae' suh detnii. Datsene nekenelghel.
Thus it is said. Down he turned back.

Yii xona 'utsii de'ak'ae xona 'utsii
There below location down below

c'eghaan dghat'aen'den danadidyaa.
war was place he went down to.

"Li'i c'a kugha 'esyaale," dae' tnii.
"Not to them I didn't go," thus he said.

"Yii c'a xona hwts'inadonolggaes. Xona naene da
"Well now you guys go back. Now we

nts'ey c'a cu tnetaliił?" Yu' 'ene'eł
what else might happen to us?" Clothes and

yide c'a yidaxyinilaayi 'ene'eł
whatever they had brought to them and

hwtsicdze' yii naxghiłyetl'.
all of it that they grabbed it.

Xona c'a cu hwts'inacehwdelnen. Xona yii suh
Then they marched back out. Then

xona katsii c'a Nay'nadeli u'dighi'a'ɒ c'a
below too Nay'nadeli it was called

dghilaay unaa yet nez'aan. Yii
mountain across there it is. There

kiicii nacehwdghilnen de. Yet suh xona
summit they marched up to there. There

c'eghaan c'eliige' yii suh xona
war song that just

kaydghi'aani kiilniiyi c'a gha snaan
he burst out with they said my mother

suh yii c'etdadliil. C'eliis Nay'nadeli
is this she will sing. Song Nay'nadeli

cii nakadaetl'den, "Snaan, kadi'aas."
peak they returned where. "Mother, you sing."

JP: (song) Datsii C'et'aa ninene'
Down river 'Feather' country

Datsii C'et'aa ninene'
Down river 'Feather' country

Ku'el kek'aayghudaex
They speared

Datsii c'et'aa ninene'.
Down river 'Feather' country.

Yii i'liis xona su snaan uta'
This song just my mother's father

hwtsicdze' 'udii c'a C'ilaanna' yiiden
all always Valdez Creek there

s'eł nakalniis. 'Udıi c'a kii'edalyiis.
to me he used to tell. Always he sang it as a medicine song.

'Adii łu xona yii i'liis xu' nt'aeyi
Now this song thus being

yiłdu' udahwdilaele.
and are scarce.

C'eliis deltsiinde
Song he made when

yet xudaa'a nakadełde suh xona c'a
there down below they were coming back where just then

yiic'a Nenana c'a dqhaanen xa'delzenen
also Nenana one who was killed relation

xudaa'a kudełdiyeden C'iidze'na' xa' ghida'en.
down river a little ways McLaren River he was staying.

Yen cu bede c'a idzii hwdghiłnen. Nanaa
He too from someone he had heard. Across

neldaan'ne koodghaan udetnii.
some of his people they killed it was said.

Hwdacaex ninadaasi su c'etiy k'a
Blocking their way he overtook them really

ni'unelguut. Naatne c'a su hwts'itałtaeł.
he was scared. Two people maybe he might have taken.

Dae' su kughile' su cu li'i c'a i'tiłdiic'e.
Thus it was too he didn't shoot.

Yeden łdu' cenk'a' yaen' łuxyinilaeyi.
At that time arrows only they carried around.

Xona bede hwts'endze' c'a kadalts'edi dii?
Then who from did the word come?

Ndaane bede c'a nakolniisi c'a
Where from who used to tell this

tkonii d'e? "Hwdacaex ninaqhasdaasi suh
they know? "Blocking their way I overtook them

xuk'a xuk'a ts'a'aane xona kudghastset de,"
but at last just I gave up,"

dghine'. Dae' su xona yen cu ukenaege'
he said. Thus then he his words

łudelts'et.
travelled around.

Xodza'a xona 'udaa'a de'ak'ae
Finally down river to their home

K'ey tsaay gha nakidaetl'de. Yii sigu
[village at mouth of Tyone River] they returned. Then

"Nets'e' tnetadeł," kiinizendze'.
"To us they will invade," they thought.

'Utggah dghilaay tsit'aak'e hwnax
Up mountain on top house

nihwkuni'aan den. Yiic'a xona k'a' k'ae
they built. That too then gun hole

xanst'aats'de'. Xdelts'iiden suh. Ndoxe
was cut through. They stayed there. How long

c'a xona nikunizetden da? Xuk'a xuk'a
then did this last? Still

li'i c'a bahwdahwdiniige. Xodzek'a nakuudghaan'
they didn't stop thinking about it. Still they might kill back (avenge)
kudetnii. K'ena kuts'ulnehde
they thought. They wouldn't stop talking about it

kudetniidze'. Xodzek'a xay'vaen nen'k'e
they thought. Kept on white man in the country

tezdaetl'dze' su xona ts'a'aane xona dadighaetl'.
they came until finally it quieted down.

Gaa yet c'a 'adii c'a c'eghaan dghat'aen'de
At this time now war was when

c'etiye xay'vaen tnelt'aene 'eł c'etiye
really white men many really

'udiic'a kiigha sudełket. Stsucde
always about they ask me. My grandmother

s'eł nakalniisi. K'oxonadze'
used to tell me. Only

li'i c'a tiy c'a nakolniisi c'a ts'itaak'e li'i
really they don't tell properly

sdists'iige dze'. Naene k'a ts'inizen dze' suh.
we haven't heard it. We just we know it.

Gaa nen'tah xu gaa ghanaay 'eł deniigi 'eł
Here country here caribou and moose and

yii suh bay'ghaan dghat'aen'i. Hnae
that's for war there was. Words

yidahwdghidaeggi gha i'ghaan dghat'aen'.
argued for war was.

Naene k'a ts'inizendze'.
We think thus.

Gaa dadaa'a Hwditsecghi'aaden.
Here below Hwditsecghi'aaden Creek.

Keniiden yehwk'e xu xona k'a
They say that far just

Tsaay Hwt'aene ninakaghadeł de.
Tyone Lake Ahtnas they used to go.

Datsiits'e' c'a xona datsii c'a Taghtiili gha
down river from there below Nenana

keniiden yii su k'adii Nenana gha xdi'aanden gha su
they say Nenana they call

Taghtiili. Yihwts'en tanaghadełne łdu'.
Taghtiili. From there people went about.

Yii danaanedze' Hwditsecghi'aaden
Then across Hwditsecghi'aaden Creek

niłt'aay nakadełdze'. Yii nekextadełdze'
they would meet. If they had turned back

kughile'den suh dae' li'i i'ghaan
if it had been thus not war

tast'iile. Dae' sigu kughile' den suh.
would not have happened. Thus it would have been.

'Unaa Xanc'eltl'aesde yetsuh hwghay'ghaan dghat'aen'.
Across Xanc'eltl'aesde therefore the war was.

Yiigha su i'ghaan dghat'aen'den.
Thus war it was.

Xanc'eltl'aesde Sakułt'aeyina' yii su
Xanc'eltl'aesde Windy Creek there

yii gha ghanaay 'eł xona ninaghal'asi 'eł
for caribou just they migrate to there and

yii gha hnae yidahwdghidaek. Xuk'a li'i
that's why they had argument. Still not

ugheli nadahwdghidlaeghe.
peace they couldn't make it.

Naene c'a nił gha xene'sdelghuusde
We too if we talk with one another

friend nił ts'el'iixden da tkut'aex de.
friend we will be when it might have been.

Xu' tkudyaakdze'. Yii ila' na'uniisi de
Thus it happened. He tried to shake hands when

inadatniicdze'. Xona ts'a'aane xona i'ghaan
he failed. Then finally war

dghat'aen'.
it was.

'Adii c'a dghesdlaani xay hwdezdlaende'
Now one hundred years from now

c'a xona bede c'a dats'ii tadaał gaani
then whoever still is living this

daaghe' xa'tle hw'eł xtatnes. Yii gha su
because of a little they will know. That's why

desniide.
I say this.

JP; Stsiye c'a Koht'aene ghighaanendze'
My grandfather people the one who killed them

ngał'aen' su sc'enggaay 'ełaen de 'ungga
I saw him child I was when up at

Benk'atggeh. Xandede eighteen ninety-nine
Tyone Village. About 1899

uyiits' i'delnen k'ent'ae. Dae' naene
he passed away it seems. Thus we

ts'inizendze'. Ben'sdełtsiini gha sedze'
we think. Snodgrass Lake at alone

nixyiniłtaen. Kiic'a' stanidaetl'
they left him. Without him they hunted

ghanaay ka. Yii suh xona ghanaay xzełghaen.
caribou after. Then caribou they killed.

Kiits'e' natesdaetl'. Yii nakidaetl'i 'eł
To him they returned. They returned and

ukole. Xona yesuh ka'aaxu k'ay'tah
he was gone. Then nearby among willows

naxtelyaes. Naxyiłtaen. Hwtsoxe gaa
they searched. They found him. First here

kiic'a' tezdaetl'de daztsaan.
from him they had gone when he died.

Ben'sdełtsiini benbaaghe yak'a nikiighiniłtset.
Snodgrass Lake lake shore right there they buried him.

Yeden c'a i'ghaan dghat'aen' den naene k'a
When war was we

ts'inizendze'	eighteen-sixty-five		kughile'i
think	1865		it happened
k'etkut'ae.	Lazeni	daa'a	nen'
it seems.	Russians	already	country

kazdaetl'de.
they had come up into.

THE WAR AT NAY'NADEŁI

We'll tell you about the war that happened a long time ago, so people will know about it.

The war occurred down below here, around Ciisik'ae (a lake south of Susitna Lodge) and Xanc'eltl'aesde (a place near Swampbuggy Lake). Let us tell you about it. What I'm telling you, my grandmother used to tell me. I have forgotten some of it. So I brought her [Jennie Peters] here to help me with it.

Jennie Peters: You tell it, go on.

Henry Peters: At that time, the people of Xanc'eltl'aesde went down the Nenana river. They killed all the people there. My grandmother used to tell me about it. Well, for a very long time, there had been a disagreement between our people and the people who lived down there. They didn't speak well with each other. This argument began because words were misunderstood. It happened when the Tyone Lake chief tried to shake hands, but failed.

Long ago, it was the custom that whatever people shook hands on, that was the law. The Tyone Lake chief brought guns to them, and fox skins too. The chief of the people who stayed at K'ey Tsaay, at the mouth of the Tyone River, was really rich, and he brought things for them. He was my mother's grandfather. He brought lots of tanned skins for the Nenana chief. Now what was the Nenana chief named?

JP: 'Feather'.

HP: He was called 'Feather.' He was the chief of the Nenana people. Now, just when the Tyone Lake chief had put down his gifts in front of the Nenana chief, and was thinking that things would be all right between them again, the Nenana chief kicked it aside.

"Come, you put them down by the river," he said. But he wouldn't shake his hand. Just on account of this, things got bad again.

At that time, down by the river, the wife of the man who brought the gifts there nudged her husband. "Be really careful how you talk. It is not going to be well."

Then the Tyone Lake people killed them. At night, they came into their houses with spears and war clubs. Just when the fighting started, at night, two Nenana people who were clansmen of the Tyone people were living down by the river. The Tyone Lake people put some tobacco in the mouths of those people. At that, they realized they were safe. Then they knew they would not be killed. They went aside. They realized they would be safe.

They killed the rest of them. They were all asleep for the night. There were five of them (from Nenana River). Here my grandmother used to say their names, but I have forgotten them.

JP: The nephew was named Sukay'nalaeɬ. He was there too. He was killed too.

HP: He was killed too. Then, when the Tyone Lake Ahtnas broke into their houses at night and killed them, and destroyed their home, they wounded one man. His wife carried him out, wounded. She carried him up into a thicket of willows. "Will they spare us?" they wondered.

"You go after that one," the chief told the Tyone Lake Ahtnas. His wife had carried him out and gone into the willows with him. She turned around and looked down the hill: they were all coming after her. She flung herself down in the willows with her husband. She lay over him and concealed him. She dragged him farther in. He was really hurt, with a spear. She kept him hidden. Then she just went up the ridge. The woman used to tell this.

Then my mother's grandfather went up above, on the ridge. Long ago they used to call it C'ets'ene seɬ, 'beaded boots'; there he went also. Up on top, he stood leaning on his spear. She was really hidden with her husband. Then he saw her there, but he didn't kill them, it seems. Thus it is said. He turned back down the hill. He went down below to where the battle was. "I didn't catch up with them," he said.

"Well, now you guys go back. Now what else is going to happen to us?" They grabbed all the clothes and whatever else they had brought to the people.

Then they marched back out. There was a mountain across from Nay'nadeɬi there. They marched up to its summit. There he burst out with a war song. My mother will sing it. This is the song they sang when they got back to Nay'nadeɬi peak. Mother, you sing.

JP (sings): Down river in Feather's country
Down river in Feather's country
They speared them
Down river in Feather's country.

This is the song, just as my mother's father always used to tell it to me at Valdez Creek. He always sang it as a medicine song. Now songs like this are very rare.

HP: After he made the song, while they were coming down, there was a man related to the Nenana people staying down river a little ways, at McLaren River. He had heard about it from someone. It was said they had killed some of his people. He overtook them and cut them off, but he was really scared. He might have taken two people with him. But he didn't shoot. At that time they only carried bows and arrows around. How did they find out about this? Who used to tell about it? "I overtook them and cut them off, but just at the last, I gave up," he said. What he said travelled around.

Finally they returned downriver to their home at K'ey Tsaay. Then they thought, "They'll invade us." They built a house up on top of the mountain. They cut a gun hole through the wall. They stayed there. How long did this last? They just didn't stop thinking about it. They thought the Nenana people might still kill them in revenge. They thought they wouldn't stop talking about it. This kept on until the white men came into the country, and then it quieted down.

Now many white men always ask me about when the war was. My grandmother used to tell me about it. Only we today can't tell it properly; we haven't heard the true story. We just know about it. In this country, they had wars over caribou and moose [territory]. They argued, and that started wars. That's what we think.

They say that the Tyone Lake Ahtnas' territory extended just below here to Hwditsecghi'aaden Creek. Downriver, there was a place they called Taghtiili; today they call it Nenana. People traveled about from there. Then they would meet across Hwditsecghi'aaden Creek. If the Tyone Lake people had turned back there, there would have been no war. It wouldn't have happened. That's why the war occurred across at Xanc'eltl'aesde. At Xanc'eltl'aesde the caribou cross Windy Creek in their migration; that's why they had the argument. They could not make peace.

Now, if we talk together, we will become friends; it might have been that way with them. The chief tried to shake hands, but he failed. Then it was war.

Now, whoever is living a hundred years from now will know a little about it because of this. That's why I say this.

JP: When I was a child up at Tyone Village, I saw my grandfather, who killed those people. I think he died about 1899. That's what we think. They left him alone at Snodgrass Lake. They went caribou hunting without him. Then they killed some caribou. They returned to him. They returned and he was gone. Then they searched among the willows nearby. They found him. He had died there after they left him. They buried him right on the shore of Snodgrass Lake. We think the war occurred about 1865. The Russians had already come up into this country.

Places mentioned in the account:

Sasutna'	Susitna River
Hwditsecghi'aaden	unnamed creek on Denali Highway, ca. 13 mi. E. of Cantwell
Nay'nadeli	hill 4160' W of Susitna Lodge
Ben'sdeltsiini	Snodgrass Lake
C'ilaanna'	Valdez Creek
Stakult'aeyina'	Windy Creek
Ciisik'ae	S. of Susitna Lodge
Xanc'eltl'aesde	place near Swampbuggy Lake